



Native Warm Season Grasses Management Job Sheet



Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning in late winter to early spring is the preferred method for maintaining healthy stands of native warm season grasses. This practice reduces weed competition, increases plant vigor, recycles nutrients, and reduces thatch and ground litter. Ground nesting habitat is improved by reducing stand density. Native warm season grass stands should be burned every 3 to 5 years.

If prescribed burning will be used in managing native warm season grass stands, consider establishing green firebreaks consisting of cool season grasses and legumes, such as orchardgrass-white clover. Instead of a green firebreak, firebreaks may be disked just prior to the scheduled burn. The firebreak should have a minimum width of at least 20 feet. Native warm season grass stands should be planted in small units of approximately 5 acres. Stands of this size are easier and safer to burn and provide better diversity of cover for wildlife.

Always obtain the proper prescribed burning permits from the Tennessee Division of Forestry and all other necessary local authorities. A prescribed burn plan should be developed and applied by experienced personnel.

Mowing

Do not mow below a height of 8" at any time. After the stand is established, mowing should be conducted outside of nesting season for ground nesting birds.

Haying

Instead of prescribed burning, haying of native warm season grasses is beneficial for removing old growth buildup (duff) that can choke out plants. For wildlife stands, haying should be no more than once every third year after full stand establishment. For livestock forage, haying can be more frequent. Haying should be conducted between July 1–October 15, cutting no lower than 8" in height.

<i>Management Restrictions for USDA Programs</i>			
Program	Haying	Grazing	Mowing
CRP	Approved emergency haying only	Prohibited	No more than once every other year outside of nesting season (Apr. 15 - July 1)
EQIP	No restrictions	No restrictions	No restrictions
WHIP	No more than once every three years outside of nesting season (Apr 15-Aug 15)	Prohibited	No more than once every three years outside of nesting season (Apr 15–Aug 15)



Light Strip-Disking

The *light strip-disking* technique can be used instead of prescribed burning to maintain a stand of native warm season grasses. It should be used only on well-established stands, approximately 5 years after seeding. This practice should not be used on slopes $>8\%$.

Disking at a depth of 2 to 3 inches should follow land contour. Undisturbed areas, approximately 3 times the width of the disked strip, should separate disked strips. Disked areas should not be wider than 50 feet. Disk approximately 1/4 of the field on an annual basis. Do not redisk area for at least 2 years.

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References

- Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA). October 1997. *Native Warm Season Grasses for the Conservation Reserve Program*.
- Capel, Stephen. 1995. *Native Warm Season Grasses for Virginia and North Carolina Benefits for Livestock and Wildlife*. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- Soil Conservation Society of America. *Warm-season Grasses: Balancing forage programs in the Northeast and Southern Cattle Belt*.